



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SAN DIEGO COUNTY COUNSEL'S OFFICE WINS STATE AWARD *Office Honored For Program That Saves Taxpayer Dollars*

The San Diego County Counsel's office has won a prestigious Challenge Award from the California State Association of Counties for its successful efforts to reduce the payment of taxpayer dollars resulting from claims and lawsuits.

The award will be presented Thursday to County Counsel John Sansone at the Association's annual meeting at the San Diego Convention Center.

"We're very honored and pleased to get this award," Sansone said. "This award is an acknowledgement that the risk mitigation training and education programs the County Counsel's office provides to the County workforce saves taxpayers dollars by avoiding costly court judgments."

Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Dianne Jacob expressed her appreciation to CSAC for recognizing the accomplishments of the County Counsel's Office. Chairwoman Jacob said, "The County Counsel's Office provides excellent representation to the County and successfully fights lawsuits, saving large sums of taxpayer dollars. The County's sterling litigation record should be a warning to anyone who thinks they can file frivolous or unwarranted suits against the county. We'll aggressively fight them at every turn."

The County was recognized for its Risk Mitigation and Litigation Program. Over the past two years, the County Counsel's Office provided 300 training and roundtable sessions to teach county employees how to reduce legal risks. It also holds twice-monthly sessions with County clients to review cases for trial or potential settlements, and to discuss ways to improve handling risks.



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The Office completed 302 litigation cases against the County in the past two fiscal years. The program's success during fiscal years 2002-03 and 2003-04 has been evident in these numbers:

- The County prefers to fight lawsuits in court rather than settling based upon its record of settling only 28% of the cases, and going to court in 72% (217 out of the 302) of the lawsuits against the County.
- When the County goes to court, it usually wins---the County achieved a 96% success rate in fighting lawsuits. 208 out of 217 court rulings/dismissals were in the county's favor resulting in the County avoiding a potential liability of over \$160 million, and thus, saving taxpayer dollars.
- The County only paid \$320,620 in judgments in 5 court cases out of the 217 court proceedings.
- The County only paid an average of \$31,058 per case in the 85 settlements it made.
- 100% of the 302 cases were handled by a County Counsel attorney serving as the lead, with little or no assistance from outside attorneys, thus saving taxpayers dollars by avoiding the high cost of paying private attorneys.

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